

This was plain speaking indeed. Known to their enemies as the " Commonwealth men " from their advocacy of social reconstruction, the group of which Latimer was the prophet and Hales the man of action naturally incurred the charge of stirring up class-hatred, which is normally brought against all who call attention to its causes\* The result of their activity was the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into offences against the Acts forbidding the conversion of arable to pasture, the introduction of legislation requiring the maintenance of tillage and rebuilding of cottages, and a proclamation pardoning persons who had taken the law into their own hands by pulling down hedges. The gentry were furious. Paget, the secretary to the Council, who was quite ready for a reign of terror, provided that the gentlemen began it, prophesied gloomily that the German Peasants' War was to be re-enacted in England ; the Council, most of whose members held abbey lands, was sullen ; and Warwick, the personification of the predatory property of the day, attacked Hales fiercely for carrying out, as chairman of the Midland committee of the Depopulation Commission, the duties laid upon him by the Government.

<sup>11</sup> Sir/ wrote a plaintiff gentleman to Cecil, " be plain with my Lord's Grace, that under the pretence

of simplicity and poverty there may [not]  
rest much  
mischiefe. So do I fear there doth in these  
men called  
Common Wealths and their adherents. To  
declare  
unto you the state of the gentlemen (I  
mean as well  
the greatest as the lowest), I assure you they  
are in such  
doubt, that almost they dare touch none of  
them [i.e.  
the peasants], not for that they are afraid of  
them, but  
for that some of them have been sent up  
and come  
away without punishment, and that Common  
Wealth  
called Latimer hath gotten the pardon of  
others/'<sup>1§</sup>

The Commonwealth called Latimer was  
unrepentant.  
Combining gifts of humour and invective  
which are  
not very common among bishops, his fury  
at oppres-